

Our chairman writes....

I have been privileged to see many harbours around the world. Chichester Harbour's unique setting and unspoilt shoreline places it in the premier league up there with the best. Winter offers a special time to get out to see its wilder side and in calmer moments to enjoy the sheer peace and tranquillity of its natural estuarine environment.

With some good fortune such as MOD ownership of Thorney Island, and remarkable foresight, our forebears have safeguarded the harbour in its current form, reinforced by local, national and international legislation.

Despite legislation, pressures are ever increasing and the Friends have a vital part to play in sustaining the harbour's inheritance. We have two main assets, our numbers and our money. With approaching 3000 members we have greater clout than ever before. Our block vote has to be listened to and you can see elsewhere in this newsletter what can be achieved with your money when matched with lottery funding and other partnerships. At the same time our working parties and volunteers make a significant contribution to help keep the harbour and surrounding Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty pristine and well managed.

Your committee is dedicated to using your voice and financial assistance where appropriate. We remain represented and involved in all the big issues and advisory management of the harbour. On a more administrative level we plan to increase the Friends profile by developing our own website to supplement the newsletter, take a look at a more striking logo, provide easier access to logo marked clothing and increased exposure in local events, libraries and wherever we might recruit new members.

How can you help? Stay a member, recruit another and keep us informed on where you would like our influence and efforts to be.

Martin Rhodes OBE

New Bid For Lottery Funds Likely

The Conservancy are expected to discuss at their January meeting whether to submit a further bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, a move which would be welcomed by the Friends.

The object would be to build on the huge amount of work completed in the three years of the original grant, which came to an end at the close of 2006. The new bid is likely to focus on landscape change, and to identify what can be done at local level to prepare for rising sea levels and climate change.

A two-day conference at the Langstone Hotel in the autumn, attended by over 120 people including David Rolph and Martin Rhodes, reviewed the work done on the 39 projects funded by the HLF. The Friends have helped to support many of these and a summary of what has been achieved is published elsewhere in this issue.

Professor Mike Clark of the Geodata Institute told the conference that sea level rise will happen, and it was essential for coastal communities to start to prepare now.

Delegates took part in a series of workshops at the conference to discuss new projects. Many of these focused on climate change and sea level rise. Projects promoting the role of education were put forward, to encourage people of all ages to understand and value the AONB.

New Wheelchair Paths at Hayling Island

Two new paths suitable for wheelchairs have been constructed by the Conservancy, with HLF funding, on Hayling Island to give wheelchair users access to viewpoints in the harbour.

One is at North Common in the village of Northney and leads to a spot on the shore where the harbour's bird life can be enjoyed. At the other end of the island, the new path is at Sandy Point, close to the RNLi station, providing excellent views of all the sailing activity in the harbour entrance.



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Conservancy Calls For Support Over Failings in Coastal Strategy Document

The Conservancy have written to thousands of harbour users to encourage them to support their concerns about the Pagham to East Head Coastal Defence Strategy.

The report, which has been published in draft form for public consultation, says the preferred option for East Head is 'managed realignment'. However, it fails to consider what impact this will have on navigation and the wider socio/economic interests of the harbour.

John Davis, the Conservancy's Manager and Harbour Master, points out that the Conservancy is legally responsible for navigation in the harbour, and the maintenance of the amenity value of the AONB for the 1.5 million visitors each year, the 28,000 regular harbour users, and the 50 marine businesses in the area.

The Conservancy believe that careful monitoring of the condition of East Head and the harbour is necessary. If the feature is 'in balance' and no adverse effect is being experienced, maintaining the status quo is the best option.

If the feature goes out of balance, 'small scale' incremental changes should be made. This may mean alterations to groynes and defences, recycling beach material to seal a breach, and other measures.

Supporting the Conservancy's action, our Chairman, Martin Rhodes, said that the Conservancy's solution of a more adaptive management policy would eminently meet the needs of all interested parties, rather than the ambiguous managed realignment policy preferred by the Environment Agency. 'This is a critical period for the harbour and I urge all friends to register their views', Martin added.

Members who want to register their views can do so on a consultation form already issued. It must be returned by 14 February 2007. All the documents about the development are available at:
www.conservancy.co.uk/environment/east_head.asp

Welcome to our New Chairman



Martin Rhodes, our new Chairman, is the sixth to be elected to that position in the Friends 20 year history. He had a long and distinguished career in the Royal Navy before joining the board of AVSeawork, a Vosper Thornycroft company.

Martin specialised in advanced navigation in the Navy, and navigated HMS Ark Royal before taking command of two front line frigates, HMS Torquay and HMS Euryalis.

His shore appointments included being Fleet Operations Officer to Commander in Chief Fleet, as well as appointments in the MOD Directorate of Naval Operations and NATO. He was awarded the Queens Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977, the Norwegian Defence Medal from King Olav in 1982, and the OBE in 1990.

Now retired, Martin lives in Northney, Hayling Island, and is a member of HISC. When not on the water, he may be seen walking the shoreline or the South Downs, or occasionally with a tent on his motorbike, anywhere in Europe. He is married with three children and seven grandchildren.

Inside: How the Friends supported HLF work



From better wheelchair access to education:

HOW THE FRIENDS HELPED THE HLF PROJECTS TO SUCCEED

The Conservancy's resounding success in the Rhythms of the Tide programme attracted £1.2m from the Heritage Lottery Fund spread over three years. This is coming to an end in 2006.

The Friends of Chichester Harbour money provided matching funds to allow many of the projects to be financed. Roughly speaking, the Lottery triples any matching fund.



As this was one of the most ambitious joint conservation projects we have ever tackled with the Conservancy, we thought members would like to see this complete list of what has been achieved with our help. The sum shown is the total cost of the project, which includes the matching contribution.



Landscape & Habitat Enhancement

Derelict Sea Defences Clearance - £40,000

Volunteers were provided with clothing, tools and training to help them as they work around the harbour

Derelict Vessel Removal - £37,000
Tree & Hedge Planting - £26,000 reinstating

hedgerows based on nature conservation, landscape and historic landscape criteria.

Harbour Volunteers - £7,000 proper clothing, tools and equipment.

Intertidal Vegetation - £22,000 analysis of aerial photography to compare with previous surveys in 1980 and 1994.

Coastal Woodlands - £21,000 reinstating lost areas of woodland

Sub tidal Features - £43,000 Geophysical Survey of the area

Dell Quay Wharf Restoration - £65,000 restoring a semi derelict grain store.

Monitoring and Surveys

Geographic Information System - £13,000 purchase a range of data and to develop tools to enhance the successful use of GIS.

Streamwatch - £2,000 monitoring the water quality of six streams draining into the harbour.

Access For All

Wheelchair Paths - £140,000 providing an additional three kilometres of access to the AONB for those with physical disabilities.

Access Upgrades - £25,000 restoring and improving access.

Sustainable Integrated Transport

Solar Powered Boat - £203,000 to provide low impact use of the AONB and afloat classroom.

Coastal Rambler Bus - £37,000 links to railway and bus stations.

Cycle and Wheelchair Path - £115,000 to provide a safe route for cyclists and wheelchairs from Chichester to West Wittering.

Dell Quay Pontoon - £37,000 new floating pontoon.



Three kilometres of new wheelchair paths were constructed. A new pontoon at Dell Quay gives easy access to the Solar Heritage



Education & Interpretation

Mobile Information Display - £15,000.

Publications - £31,500 two new publications 'The Chichester Harbour Explorer's Handbook' aimed at younger children and 'Chichester Harbour - A Reference Guide'.

Interpretation Boards - £20,000 important features

on how to enjoy the area in a sustainable way located at key areas of interest and access.

Educational Sea Chests for Children - £9,000.

Field Studies Equipment - £5,000 to support programme of fieldwork.

Education was a key feature of the project, sea chests (top) are loaned out to local schools to support field visits. An Explorers Handbook (right) is packed with things for young visitors to do



CREATING HABITATS FOR BEES AND PEOPLE

Dozens of working parties take place each year: they are sociable, fun and make a real difference to the environment. With the object of encouraging more Friends to join in, we asked *Richard Townsley*, a Conservation Ranger, to summarise what has been achieved in the last quarter.

We've had a busy season so far, with many tasks completed. A really big thank you to all of you who have come along and helped out. It has been great to see so many of our 'regulars' and to meet the newer volunteers. New faces are always welcome!

The stream management task at Fishbourne Meadows was a lot wetter than usual, it tipped it down! Despite the weather, a number of stalwart volunteers appeared, and were keen to 'have a go'. After squelching around in the stream, and removing some of the built up vegetation the task was finally ended due to a large electrical storm. We'll be back there to try again on 15 March 2007.



Much footpath maintenance work has been carried out on the coastal footpath network. This has happened at three main sites: Rookwood, Dell Quay, and on Thorney Island, The job is mostly one of cutting back and 'coppicing' the encroaching vegetation, so that the footpath can be enjoyed by all.

Coppicing: Work continues on the next area at Salterns Copse, this woodland is managed on a 10 year rotation in the traditional 'Coppice with Standards' method.

Other tasks carried out at the working parties, have included; dry stone walling and sea defence repairs, cutting back and general tidy up at the car park at Cobnor. Also exposing the wooden fence posts from a mass of brambles, at the 'Bee Fence' at Thornham, in doing so creating vital habitat for *Stelis breviscula* and *Heriades truncorum* (both nationally rare species of bee).

The tasks are normally held on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursdays between 10.00am and 12.00pm. All you need are some old clothes, enthusiasm and a sense of humour; we supply everything else, tools, gloves, tea, coffee, biscuits and bad jokes.

Looking forward to 2007, there are thousands of trees to be planted: so there will be many opportunities to 'do your bit' for the environment.

TRUST SEEKS 'BUFFER ZONE' TO PROTECT FISHBOURNE

The Chichester Harbour Trust is keen to establish a 'buffer zone' to protect the harbour from the impact of the Stockbridge relief road plan in the north-east of the harbour.

Discussions are under way with West Sussex County Council, because the Trust fears that a new main road to the west of Stockbridge would bring building development much closer to the Fishbourne channel.

At a recent meeting, the Trustees decided to redouble their fundraising efforts to make further progress towards the target of £1 million for land purchases.

FINDING OUT HOW FARMERS SUPPORT CONSERVATION

Members of the Friends were among a hundred or so members of the public who braved torrential rain to take part in this year's farm walks and talks experience at Tournerbury Farm, on Hayling Island, in October.

Turnerbury is a large, family owned beef farm bordering on the western shoreline of the harbour. Walking round the fields, you feel you are seeing the Hayling Island of a century or so ago, rather than the highly developed conurbation of today.

Experts who could talk to visitors about farming, the environment and archaeology were on station during the walk around the farm. Alison Fowler, the Conservancy's AONB Manager, told visitors: 'farmers play an important part in supporting and managing the wildlife and habitats found on coastal grazing marsh and farmland in the harbour'.

The Friends had a display stand at the event (fortunately, under cover), which was organised by the Conservancy in conjunction with the Three Harbours Beef scheme and funded by the HLF.



Judi and Lois provided hot drinks to warm up the very wet visitors to Tournerbury Farm!

Brent Geese Are Back in Their Thousands



Midwinter, and the harbour is full! Not of boats, writes *Anne de Potier*, but of wildfowl and waders passing the hostile months in relative warmth and comfort, and doing their best to maintain their condition ready to return north to breed in spring.

Chief amongst these visitors are Brent geese. From mid September one of the commonest questions I am asked is, 'Are the geese back yet?' People listen expectantly for the familiar 'Rnk, rnk' call - perhaps the official beginning of winter. Come December, and anyone

spending time close to the harbour is made aware of their presence, often by the sight of several hundred in a flock moving from a channel to a nearby field. The sound is anticipatory: the birds' preferred food is winter cereal crops, or closely mown grass. In the reverse direction, after disturbance by the farmer or a roaming dog, the voices are angry and much louder! To look at, Brents are small for geese, charcoal grey with white rears.

The race we have is the Dark-bellied Brent goose. They breed in Siberia, and winter along the coasts of Western Europe, mainly on sites characterised by mudflats and saltmarsh, so Chichester Harbour is one of the favoured choices.

Brent geese in the harbour are counted by volunteers monthly along with the other wildfowl and waders. For the last few years the peak number has been roughly 8,000;

On average 8,000
Brent geese come to
Chichester Harbour
each winter

the highest was 12,647 in January 1994. A total over 2,200 qualifies as internationally important, so that shows the value of the Chichester birds. The numbers are very dependent on the breeding success; this is also monitored by volunteers.

The variation is explained by a number of factors, notably weather and predation. Obviously if snow persists in Siberia that is bad news. So too is a shortage of lemmings - not because the geese eat them (they are vegetarian, and the chicks eat small insects), but because the predators such as Arctic Foxes and Snowy Owls, which generally eat lemmings will take goose eggs and goslings if there are few lemmings. As lemmings are notoriously cyclical in their annual numbers this can be reflected in the productivity of the geese, but lately that relationship seems to have gone awry.



Brent geese leave the harbour in mid-March to begin their slow return north stopping first on the Wadden Sea for pre-migration fattening. Suddenly the harbour is very quiet: the sound which we have got used to over several months is no longer a background to our activity, and, excepting a very few birds (probably injured) which spend the summer here, we will not see them until next September. So enjoy them while you can.



2005 A BUSY AND SUCCESSFUL YEAR FOR THE FRIENDS

It was 'full house' at Chichester Yacht Club in October for the 19th annual meeting of the Friends.

Presenting his last report before retiring as Chairman, David Rolph said the past year had been a busy and successful one for the charity. A third tranche of £12,000 had been donated to support the Conservancy's 'Rhythms of the Tide' project; a further £15,000 had been donated for a range of projects including new kissing gates and equipment for the Education Centre, and 1500 trees had been planted by members.

Our membership had risen to well over 1800 households, plus growing numbers of Life Members.



One of the new kissing gates at Fishbourne funded by the Friends

Hon. Treasurer Alan Stewart-Fitzroy told members that in the past eight years, income had risen from £6,000 to £34,000 and the range of projects we were able to support widened each year.

Sir Jeremy Thomas told the meeting that the Chichester Harbour Trust had now acquired six sites round the harbour, as a result of which some 200 acres of land was now securely protected.

Acquiring Eames Farm on an undeveloped part of Thorney Island had been a particular milestone, he said. The Trust had a long 'wish list' of other sites needing protection.

Lt Col John Davis, the Conservancy's Harbour Master, reported that 2005/6 had been a good year for the harbour in all sorts of ways. The Heritage Lottery Fund project, now coming to an end, had been 'a huge success'. Nine thousand children had used the Education Centre's facilities, and the support of the Friends in buying equipment was much appreciated.

At the meeting, Martin Rhodes OBE, was elected Chairman; Nigel Roper Vice Chairman; and David Weston was co-opted on to the committee.

After the meeting, Julie Satchell of the Hants and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology gave a presentation on the Trust's work. There were 800 known wreck sites in the Solent and Wight area. One of the oldest - a long boat found at Langstone - could be dated to 400 to 600 AD with warships of the 18th and 19th centuries in the Hayling and Bracklesham bay areas which had fallen foul of sandbanks and storms.

NEW GUIDE TO ALL THE HARBOUR HAS TO OFFER

An excellent and comprehensive book summarising all that Chichester Harbour AONB has to offer has just been published by the Conservancy, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund.



'Chichester Harbour - a Reference Guide' is really a *vade mecum* combined with encyclopaedia - and as it has been produced in A5 format and is spiral bound it can easily be carried around the harbour and used by members of the public in search of information on subjects as diverse as coastal plants and the identification of sailing dinghies.

There are sections on how the harbour is managed, wildlife above and below the waterline, sailing, archaeology and geology, and coastal management. Hundreds of colour illustrations will help readers to enjoy the harbour even more, by gaining a deeper understanding of so many of its different facets.

Sea Thrift is just one of the more than 40 coastal plants described in the Reference Guide

The book has been published for the many thousands of students who visit the area each year, as well as residents keen to know more about this fascinating place, one of the few undeveloped coastal areas in southern England.



Two of the Friends' Trustees have contributed chapters: Peter Cameron's article describes all the coastal plants to be found in the harbour, with a colour photograph of each one.

Ian McIntyre, who has been sailing in the harbour for more years than he cares to remember, describes how the harbour has become a paradise for sailors, with 25,000 people taking to the harbour waters each year.

Copies of the Guide can be bought from the Harbour Office at Itchenor, price £4 plus £1 for postage and packing.

CREATIVE HELP WANTED

The Friends are looking for a volunteer experienced in, or interested in, media promotion to help us to raise our profile by supplying local media with information about our organisation, and the work it does. If you would like to help on a part time voluntary basis, please contact Martin Rhodes (details on back page).